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## EOC examines status of student achievement and progress toward 2010 goal

*Editor's Note: A pdf copy of Where Are We Now? can be found on the EOC website at [www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org), under "In the News." A copy of the 2005-2006 Critical Actions and Objectives is located online as well.*

**Columbia** – As South Carolina enters its eighth year of education accountability, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) today presented its annual *Where Are We Now?* report, to update the public on the focus of student achievement and South Carolina's effort to reach the 2010 goal.

"We know our state's leaders – the Governor and members of the South Carolina General Assembly – are gearing up for some tough decisions regarding education this legislative session," said Alex Martin, EOC Vice Chairman, who presented the report in the lobby of the Statehouse. "We hope to use this opportunity to provide evidence of the accomplishments of our education accountability system, point to challenges that remain, and to encourage continued investment in support of higher levels of student achievement."

Martin released the status of nine strategic issues which were established to annually measure South Carolina's progress toward the 2010 goal, which states, "*By the year 2010, South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country.*"

The progress measures analyzed in the report include student achievement on national and international tests and the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), graduation rates, and drop out rates. Additional measures focus on schools being free from drugs, weapons, and

teacher victimization by students as well as the percentage of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma.

“Data on these nine points show spots of progress but also demonstrate that we have significant challenges before us,” stated Martin. “We must strengthen our efforts to evaluate every aspect of our educational system to ensure all students achieve at high levels.”

Points included in the presentation include:

- Results from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show steady improvement. South Carolina’s fourth and eighth grade student performance in math exceeded the national average. SC’s eighth grade math performance was higher than counterparts in 24 states and statistically the same as eighth graders in seven other states. However, NAEP 2005 reading performance, in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, dipped slightly.
- Since 2000, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in South Carolina have increased 27 points, compared to the national average of nine points.
- South Carolina participation on Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) assessment is increasing although assessment results are just below the national average.
- The 2005 PACT results reveal an increase in all subject areas – English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. However, students are not close to meeting the target set within the 2010 Goal – 9 out of 10 students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced* by the year 2010. Thirty-four percent of students in grades 3-8 scored Proficient or above on the English Language Arts portion of PACT. Across the grades in Mathematics, 33 percent of students scored Proficient or above. Twenty-seven percent of students scored Proficient or above in Social Studies and 26 percent in Science.
- A persistent gap continues to exist in achievement between minority and majority group students and their economically advantaged or disadvantaged peers.

Martin stressed that a quality education system is the foundation for a prosperous, economic future in South Carolina.

“The EOC remains committed and focused on continuous improvement in South Carolina’s schools,” stated Martin. “The improvement process calls upon each of us to be engaged in our communities – and to take ownership of them.”

In addition to fulfilling the responsibilities assigned by the General Assembly, the EOC organizes its work to contribute and stimulate continued progress. Martin also discussed the critical actions and objectives adopted by the committee, outlining their priorities.

“We must focus on working at the community level to create conditions in which all of South Carolina’ students can achieve successfully at high academic levels,” stated Martin. “Our approach to education must be relentless if we are to reach our goal.”

*Established by the EAA, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC’s educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.*

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